

# Siam

## I. A Far Eastern Land of Peace & Progress

By W. A. Graham

Author of "Siam: A Handbook"

**S**IAM is one of the few tropical countries in the world now in a complete state of independence, and is the only country that combines a considerable degree of modern civilization with the rule of an untrammelled Oriental despot.

About 95 per cent. of the nation consists of a primitive peasantry entirely devoted to agricultural pursuits, with an infusion of Chinese merchants, tradesmen, and artisans. The remainder includes the sovereign and his court, the uncles, brothers, cousins and nephews of the king, with their households, the ministers of state, and their functionaries, great and small, engaged in the administration.

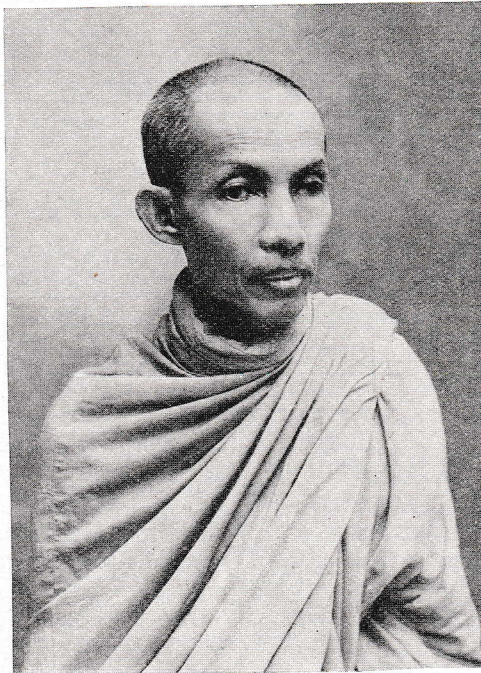
Siam contains about nine and a quarter million inhabitants. Outwardly the people are all very much alike, about 90 per cent. being Buddhists, while the features, complexion, stature and other characteristics of the Mongoloid type are common to all.

Actually, however, the nation is far from homogeneous. The great central plain, the wealthiest part, is occupied by the Siamese proper, who call

themselves "Thai," in number about four millions, a race evolved from a fusion of the two great and quite distinct families of Mongoloid stock, the Lao-Tai and Môn-Annam.

Eastern and Northern Siam are inhabited by people of unmixed Lao-Tai stock, cousins of the Siamese, to whom their relationship appears in the approximation of the languages and customs and in the appearance of the two peoples. These the Siamese call Lao, but for all purposes of official administration they now class them with themselves as Thai. The Lao in Siam number about three and a half

millions. In addition to the above there is a population, chiefly confined to the mountain ranges, of the Môn-Annam clans, the largest of which are the Ka and Lawa, or hill tribes remotely connected with the Burmese race, and of communities of Shan, Karen, Khmers, Annamese, and Malays. Lastly there is the population of Bangkok, the capital; a city of shopkeepers, merchants, and officials, the first two categories almost entirely pure Chinese and the last Siamese,



CHIEF ABBOT OF SIAM

In consideration of the fact that they have passed the nine grades of proficiency, Siamese abbots are called Maha, or great. This particular dignitary is, besides, a king's uncle

Photo, W. A. Graham





#### SIAMESE VILLAGERS AND A GRASS-ROOFED VILLAGE DWELLING

Most Siamese houses up-country stand on or near a river bank. When a young man marries he builds his home gradually. First of all a structure like this is made of teak if he be well-to-do, otherwise of bamboo with a grass roof. As time goes on, and the family increases, similar structures are added so as to form three sides of a square

*Photo, Charles J. Charbot*

with a crossing of Chinese blood. The features of the Siamese are strongly Mongoloid. A wide, flat head, a prognathous jaw, a flat, broad nose, long and slightly oblique eyes, large ears, and high cheek bones, are usual physical characteristics. The physique of the countryman is naturally sturdy and well developed, and that of the townsman has been immensely improved by the physical exercises and athletic games ordained by King Rama VI. for all schoolboys and youths, and by compulsory army service.

The complexion of the Siamese is brown, and varies much with individuals, passing from the nearly white of high-bred women through infinite gradations to the deep chocolate colour of the sunburnt peasant. Black hair and brown eyes are universal, and

facial and body hair is more or less absent. The average height for men is about five feet two inches, and for women about four feet ten inches.

At one time both sexes of all classes wore the hair short and stiffly upright, and the teeth, partly from chewing betel and partly from intentional dyeing, were usually deep black. At the beginning of his reign, in 1910, King Rama VI. allowed it to be known that stubbly hair and black teeth were not by him considered obligatory.

Thereupon young men began to wear their hair in European fashion, while young women grew their long and learnt to "do" it in various attractive ways. At the same time the colouring of the teeth was given up, and the use of cheap imported cigarettes, capturing the fancy of the



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younger generation, ousted betel-chewing from its former pride of place.

The principal garment of the Siamese, both male and female, is a cloth about two and a half feet wide and seven feet long, the middle part of which is passed round the body, which it covers from the waist to the knees, and hitched in front so that the two ends hang down before. These ends being twisted together into a rope are passed backwards between the legs, drawn up and tucked into the waist at the middle of the back. The garment is called "panoong," may be of cotton or silk, and is of all sorts of patterns, an ancient custom prescribing a distinctive colour for each day of the week.

In addition to the panoong, the rustic man wears either nothing at all or a short loose jacket, while his

women-folk wear a narrow scarf, called "pa-hom," wound round the bust, or a tight-sleeved and closely buttoned jacket. The men of the upper class wear white drill or tussore silk coats of European cut over a muslin shirt, Homburg hats, cotton stockings, and pipe-clayed shoes, which, with the panoong, make an effective costume; but uniforms on European models having been introduced for civil as well as military officers, the panoong has given place to trousers for occasions of ceremony.

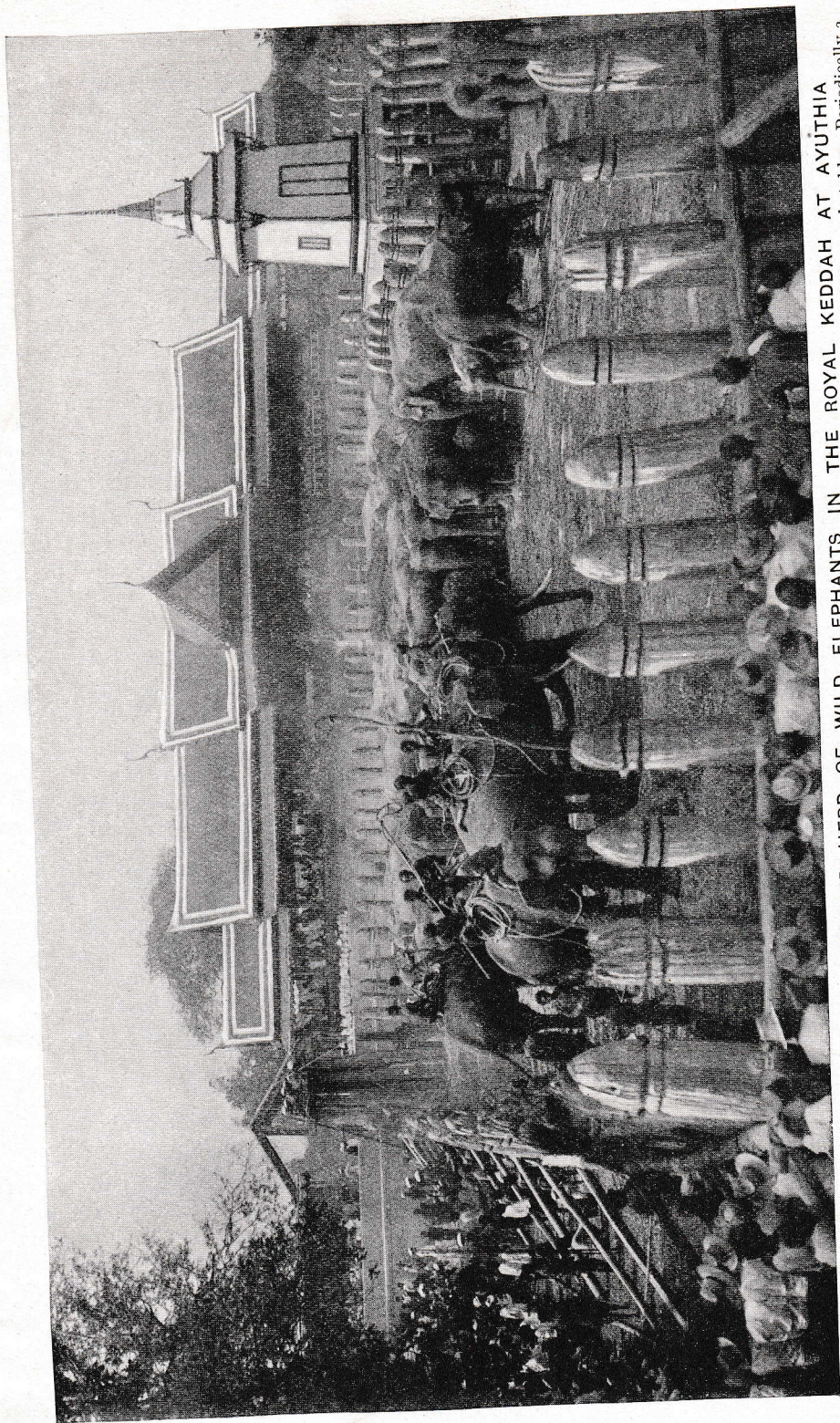
The ladies of the upper class wear blouses, silk stockings, and high-heeled shoes, and a few of them have taken to skirts, either European or similar to those worn by their Lao cousins of the north, in place of the panoong. Small children wear no clothes at



### BRILLIANT DIGNITY OF THE CORONATION CEREMONY IN SIAM

In front of a beautifully designed pavilion sits the King. On both sides are attendants who bend the knee while they hold the queerly shaped but gorgeously decorated sunshades, a feature of all Siamese ceremonial. In front of his Majesty is a table bearing the consecrated waters. Drinking and pouring water over the person play a large part in religious rites, and are often Brahman in origin





**SELECTING A BULL FROM A CAPTURED HERD OF WILD ELEPHANTS IN THE ROYAL KEDDAH AT AYUTHIA**  
 All wild elephants in Siam are held to be royal property, and those which live in the plains are specially reserved for the restocking of the royal stables. Periodically a herd is driven slowly towards Ayuthia, some forty miles north of Bangkok. The animals are herded into the enclosure or keddah on the first day of the show. During the second, men on trained elephants and carrying ropes contrive to noose certain bulls by the leg. Huge crowds assemble, and the king comes in person to watch the proceedings, which form the chief royal diversion

*Photo. O. A. Fry*



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all except on state occasions. Jewelry of artistic design is much worn by women and children. The heads of babies and small children are usually shaved bare except for a small spot in the middle of the crown on which the hair is allowed to grow long.

It is only a few years since Siam began to emerge from the traditional social conditions of Oriental despotism, and the national character still bears signs of the influence of such conditions. These appear in the subserviency shown to all acknowledged superiors and the equally pronounced arrogance indulged in at the expense of inferiors.

Towards their equals the Siamese are light-hearted, open and frank, hospitable, peace-loving, and usually humane. Family ties are very close, and love of children is strongly developed. The national character is easily influenced either for good or evil. Many of the commoner failings are due to an inordinate vanity.

The Siamese have no commercial aptitude. Naturally, therefore, the business of the country is almost entirely in the hands of foreigners. The peasant has few wants, and no incentive to undertake more than the two or three months' labour that suffices for the raising of his yearly rice crop. The townsman differs from his country cousin only in having more wants, to satisfy which he will engage in the lighter forms of work, but to as small an extent as possible. The typical peasant's house is a wooden structure



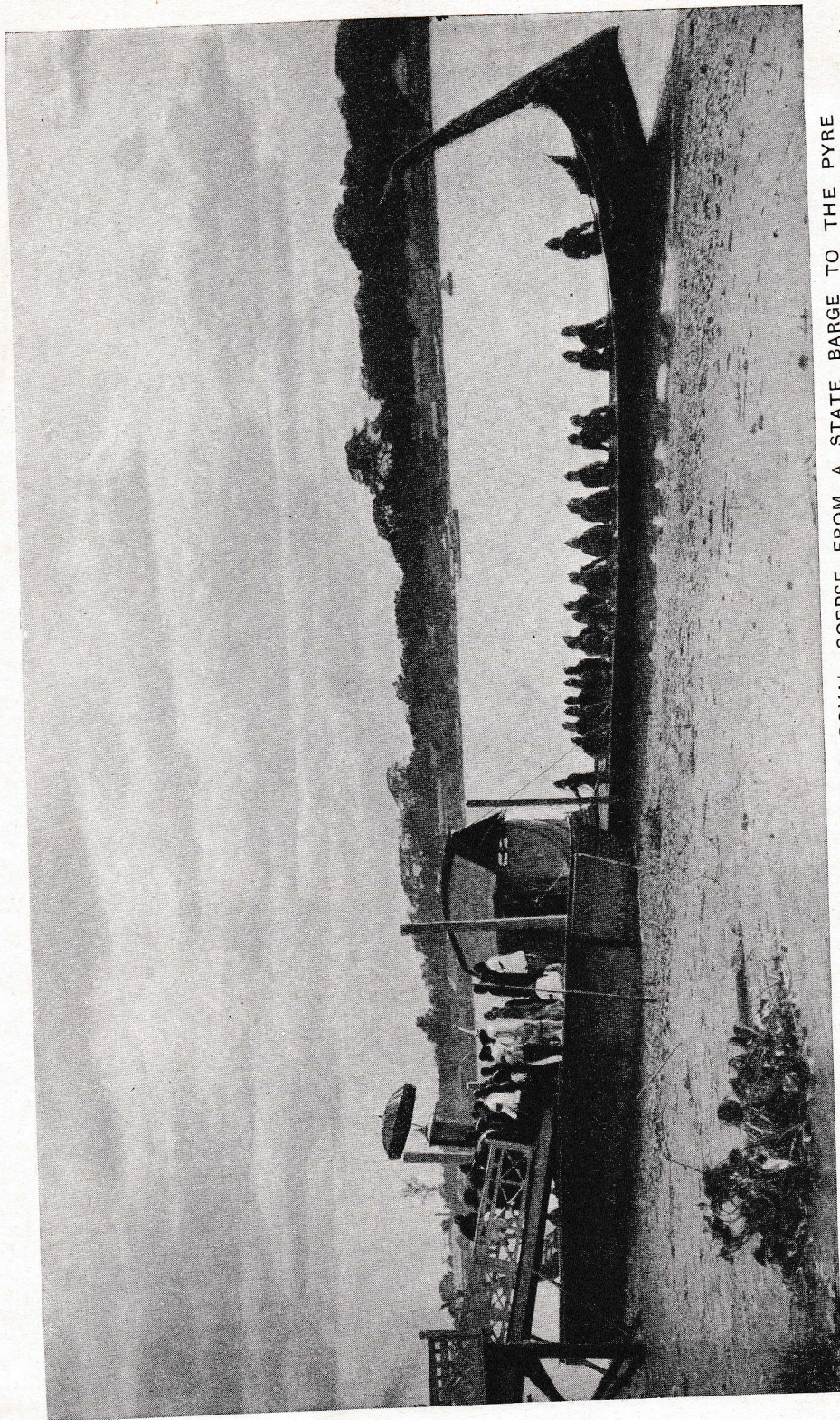
### "IT IS ALWAYS SAFE TO LEARN"

Arrayed in academic robes, the Minister of Public Instruction points to printed books, whose introduction into Siam has revolutionised education there. The system now includes primary, secondary, and departmental schools, and the admirable Chulalongkorn University at Bangkok

*Photo, W. A. Graham*

on long posts standing on the bank of a river or creek. It consists of one, two, or three oblong buildings opening on to a wooden platform from which a flight of steps descends to the ground or into the water. Each oblong consists of one or more rooms opening into a narrow veranda which skirts the platform. The kitchen occupies a small back room whence refuse is discharged through the interstices of the floor. Building material varies from the flimsiest bamboo matting and thatch to solid teak and tiles. Nowadays corrugated iron is freely used. Bangkok—with its royal palaces, its

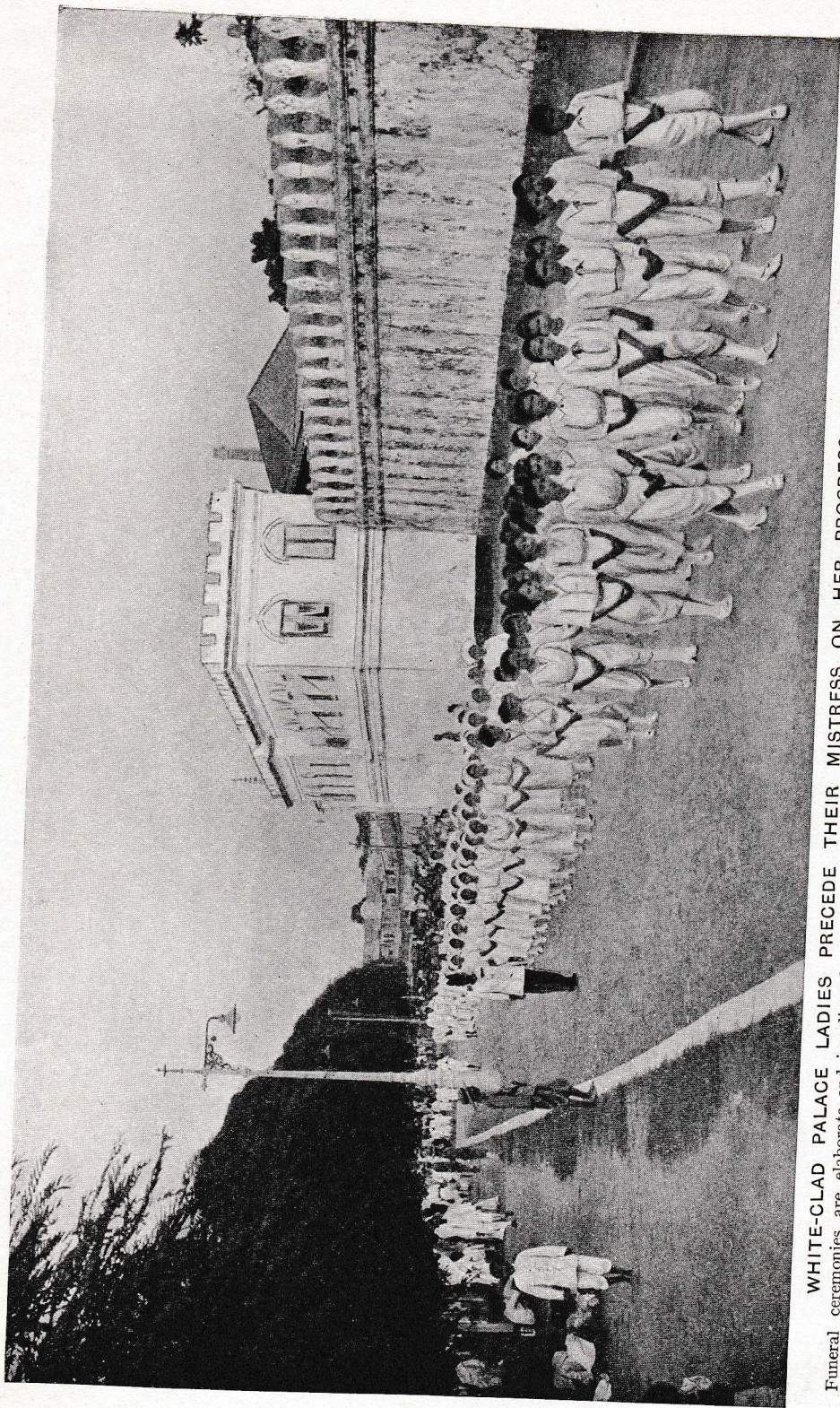




CONVEYING THE GOLDEN URN CONTAINING A ROYAL CORPSE FROM A STATE BARGE TO THE PYRE  
 When some personage near the throne comes to die, his remains are placed in a sitting posture and packed in a copper urn covered with gold. The cremation is a matter of days. First the body is brought to the place of burning. Next it is placed on the pyre; the whole is ignited, and the residue at length collected in a smaller urn. The state barges of Siam are some one hundred and sixty feet long and seven feet broad, their hulls being dug out of a single tree-trunk. The crew with their long paddles keep time to the thudding of a silver spear upon a platform in the bows

*Photo, Charles J. Charbol*





# WHITE-CLAD PALACE LADIES PRECEDE THEIR MISTRESS ON HER PROGRESS TO THE FUNERAL PYRE

Funeral ceremonies are elaborate and inordinately protracted in Siam. So much so that, where members of the royal family are concerned, the ultimate cremation of the corpse may be deferred for as long as several years after death. White is the mourning colour in the country, and a touching note of simple grace was imparted to the procession that escorted the remains of the queen-mother to the funeral pyre in 1920 by the company of palace ladies in snowy garb marching with hands clasped before them. They were followed by hospital nurses in skirts and caps of equally dazzling whiteness

*Photo, W. A. Graham*





UNIFORMS RICH, AND RARE AND ELABORATE CEREMONIAL AT THE ROYAL PALACE AT BANGKOK

Siamese kings were second to none in their insistence on the royal prerogative and dignity. Not merely every subject, but his goods also were at the disposal of the sovereign, who was the brilliant and awesome head of a formality-ridden social structure. Though the more modern monarchs, who in their youth tasted the education and ideas of other lands, have done away with much of the cumbrous ceremonial, and particularly the nuisance of the complete prostration, great pomp still attends their going out and their coming in

*Photo, Charles J. Charbol*



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handsome public offices, clubs, business houses, foreign legations, busy streets served by electric trams and lighting, and, down-river, its rice-mills, saw-mills, wharves, and warehouses, mingling with innumerable and very beautiful Buddhist temples and monasteries; and with, at its riversides, its serried rows of floating houses and quaint, ramshackle dwellings on posts—is a most interesting city.

The floating houses are a peculiar feature. These are usually of teak covered with Nipah thatch. One or two high-pitched roofs cover a floor some forty feet square resting upon floating pontoons. The space is divided into front and back room, with a small kitchen behind and a veranda in front. The house is moored near the shore facing outwards, and is approachable from the water.

### Amphibious Life of the Siamese

The people being mostly riparian dwellers, it follows that they are expert watermen. Excepting in the mountainous districts, the rivers and creeks are the principal highways, and much of the out-of-door life of the people is passed on the water. Children can usually swim almost as soon as they can walk. The women go in boats to markets that are held on the water; the monks go their alms-seeking rounds in canoes; pedlars of food and other goods paddle themselves and their wares from house to house; and, in spite of the railways, seven-tenths of the merchandise of the country is conveyed in boats from the places of production to those of sale.

Many people live either altogether or for a part of the year in boats, varying in size with the means of the owners, and in shape with the locality where they are built. The waters of the Menam river at Bangkok are usually alive with steam and motor launches used by the well-to-do for business or pleasure, while passenger launches, called by courtesy "mail boats," ply

daily on the main rivers and canals. The principal domestic customs of the various races have much resemblance, are mostly of common origin, and are more or less connected with religion in one or other of its various aspects.

### Happy Days of Early Childhood

A Siamese child is born in a room from which all evil influences have been carefully removed by incantation and prayer, such medical assistance as may be considered necessary being provided by a wise-woman, who notes all particulars of the birth and directs the heat-cure to which the mother, in accordance with the general practice of Further India, is subjected.

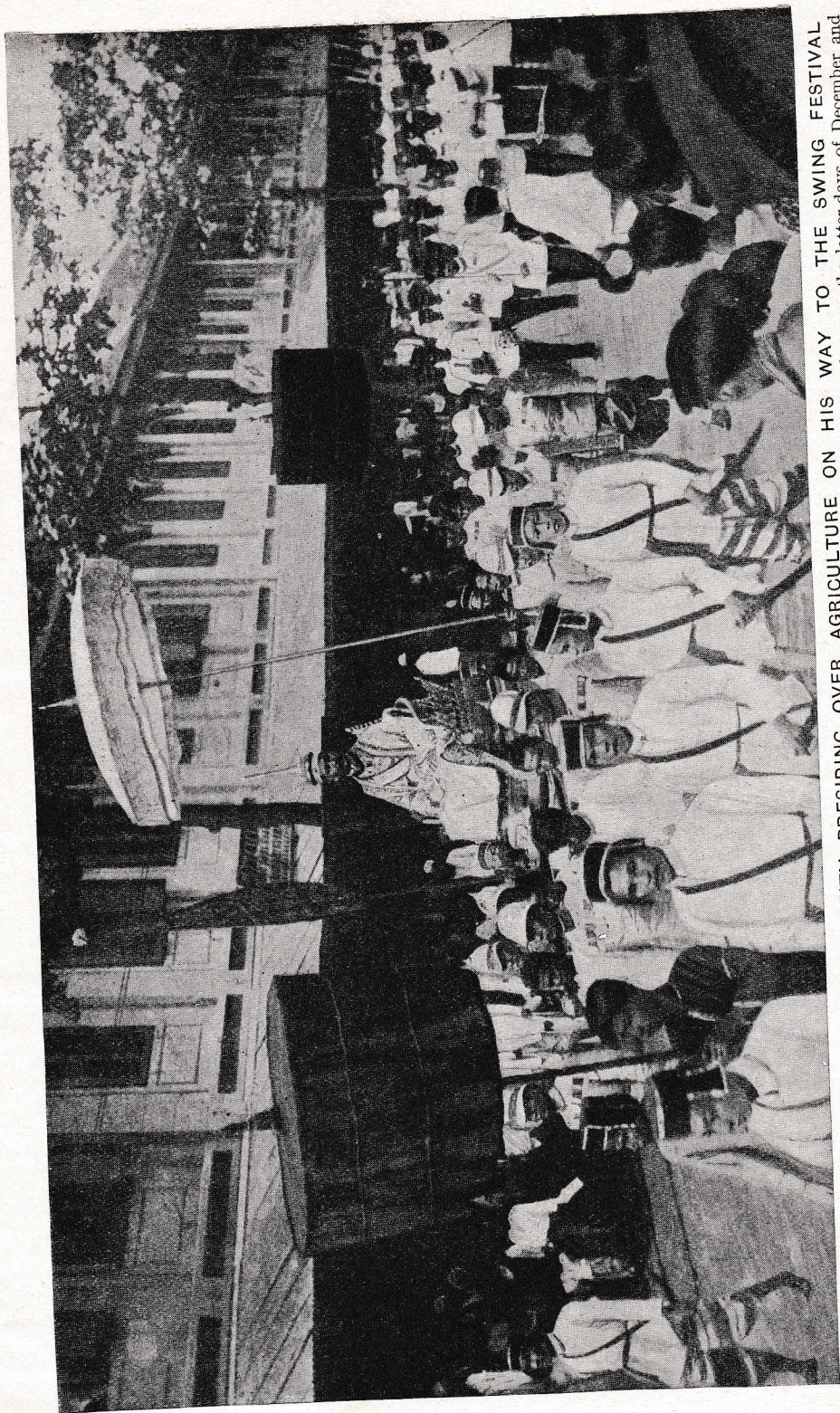
As soon as convenient a soothsayer is called in, and in the presence of an assembly of relatives, the horoscope of the child is drawn and an appropriate name selected. At the age of about two years the child is finally weaned, being by that time able to run about, to talk, and to take an intelligent interest in the life surrounding it.

From then until the age of five or so the child lives free and naked, the spoilt darling of the family, acquiring much fairy lore, many superstitions, and probably a knowledge of the alphabet. At the age of about six the regular use of clothing is adopted, whereupon school life begins.

### Religion and Ritual in Education

Under a modern Compulsory Education Act the peasant child faintly pursues knowledge in the village monastery or at a secular school, until released to the avocations of husbandry at the age of fourteen or thereabouts. The town boy, intended for non-agricultural pursuits, will continue his education through school and university until fitted for the profession or calling it is his lot to follow. Though schools for girls exist, female education in Siam can hardly be said to have begun. Chinese voluntary schools for boys and girls, with complete Chinese

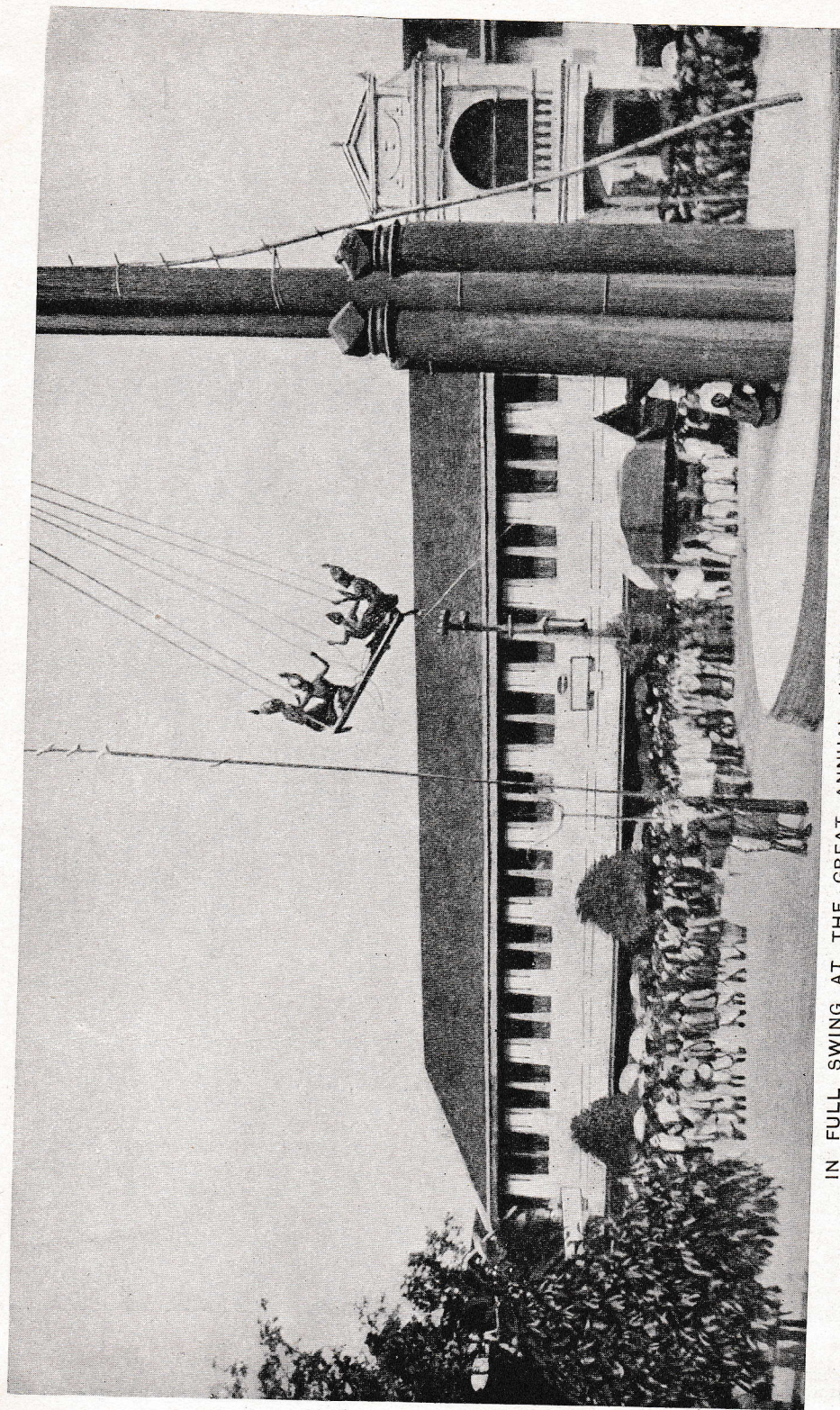




**NOBLEMAN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEITY PRESIDING OVER AGRICULTURE ON HIS WAY TO THE SWING FESTIVAL**  
As a mark of gratitude for the harvest, and to ensure future prosperity for the husbandmen, there is held at Bangkok, between the latter days of December and the middle of January, the curious and remarkable Swing Festival. The ceremonies are conducted by Brahmins, and the first consists of parading through the streets a human representative of the god of the lower heaven. This personage is a member of the nobility chosen by the king, and is not twice elected. He takes lessons beforehand in divine department from Brahman professors and is accorded all the reverence due to his temporary godship

*Photo, Georg Haechel*





# IN FULL SWING AT THE GREAT ANNUAL HARVEST CELEBRATIONS AT BANGKOK

When the deputy of the god has taken up his prescribed position, four men are hoisted to the seat of the swing. This measures six feet by one, and is suspended with its greatest length at right angles to the cross-bar by six rattan ropes, at a height of about fifteen feet from the ground. A rope fastened to it is pulled by men below, and one of the swingers must, in full course, seize in his mouth a small bag of money at the end of a pole. This is repeated twice, and the crowd anxiously watch, for, according to their notion, bungling means bad harvests for the rest of the year

*Photo, Georg Haackel*





#### SIAMESE CATTLE-THIEF UNDER THE YOKE

Serious crime is not very prevalent among the Siamese, who as a whole are a peaceable race amenable to authority. Justice, too, is well administered under the Ministry of Justice organized in 1892. On his way to gaol after conviction for cattle-stealing, this prisoner is wearing a bamboo frame to prevent him running into the woods and so escaping his escort





# WIFE OF A PETTY OFFICIAL WITH HER DARKER-SKINNED SERVANT

In Siam there is a special class, some of whom occupy official positions, called Môn. They are of Talaing stock, and descended in many cases from captives of war taken from the old Pegu kingdom in Burma. Môn women may be recognized by a little fringe around their foreheads, the Siamese ladies seldom indulging in long hair. The one-piece garment hitched between the legs is called a "panoong"

*Photo, Charles J. Charbot*





**MINISTRANTS TO THE ORIENTAL HABIT OF MASTICATION : SIAMESE WOMEN SELLING BETEL-NUT**  
 As among most Oriental peoples, betel-chewing is an almost universal practice of the Siamese. Betel-nut is really the seed of the fruit of the areca palm, boiled, sliced, and dried in the sun. Small pieces are wrapped in a leaf of the betel pepper plant with a little pellet of lime, and slowly chewed, stimulating a flow of bright red saliva which gradually turns the teeth black. Within recent years the younger generation of Siamese have shown a tendency to abandon betel-chewing in favour of smoking cheap imported cigarettes  
*Photo. O. A. Fry*



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curriculum, are a new feature in Bangkok. Custom decrees that, between the ages of ten and thirteen, children should undergo the ceremony of head-shaving (known as topknot cutting) as a formal proclamation of adolescence. This ceremony, observed among the royal family and higher class with much extravagant ritual, seems to be falling gradually into disuse with the general public.

Due observance of the Buddhist faith entails for every male a period of existence as a monk, which may be lifelong or for two or three days only, but should in no case be altogether eschewed. The usual term of seclusion is about three months, and the entry upon this period is marked by elaborate celebrations at which the hero of the moment appears, surrounded by worldly grandeur and delights which he discards at the appropriate moment in imitation of the great renunciation of the Buddha. These rites should properly be accomplished at an early age, but are frequently postponed until comparatively late in life.

### Ceremonies Attending Marriage

A Siamese man at the age of nineteen or twenty and a girl at fifteen or so have reached full marriageable age. Marriages may be of convenience or of affection, and in fact are usually a combination of the two kinds. According to the means of the parties and their relatives, the ceremonial accompanying a marriage may be elaborate or practically absent. The matter is first and foremost a civil contract, the religious aspect, though recognized, being considered scarcely material.

A marriage celebration is held at the house of the bride's father in the presence of relatives and friends of both parties. It consists of the counting of the "Thun" (pron. Toon) or housekeeping capital, the presentation of a betel-nut outfit and joint partaking therefrom by the principals, the binding of the pair with a sacred cord and the

pouring of holy water over them by the guests, and concludes with a formal introduction of the bride into the bridal chamber. Polygamy, considered correct for the higher class and necessary for the king, is not much practised by the peasantry. The first wife is the chief wife, and marriages with lesser wives are usually without ceremony. But children of lesser wives are recognized legally.

### Pomp and Circumstance of Death

When a Siamese dies his body is placed in a coffin, or a large golden urn if of royal blood, and mounted upon a sort of altar constructed in the principal room of the house, where it remains in state surrounded by the most cherished belongings of the deceased, and by such ornaments and valuables as the family may be able to assemble. Previous to being placed in the coffin it is washed with much ceremony, relatives and friends assisting and choirs of monks chanting appropriate formulae.

Afterwards religious services are held at intervals, those on the seventh, the fiftieth, and the hundredth days after the death being particularly important. After a period, which may extend to several years, the ceremony of cremation takes place, when the relatives of the deceased entertain their friends to the utmost of their means. Unlimited food and drink and various games are provided, everyone, beginning with the guest of honour, contributes fire and combustibles to the funeral pyre, and an exhibition of fireworks fills in the time between the burning of the body and the collection of the ashes next morning.

### Religion, Art, and Literature

These ceremonies run through infinite gradations according to the importance of the deceased and the wealth of his heirs. The lying-in-state services and cremations of members of the royal family are in a measure public festivals,



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which last many days, thousands of people being fed daily and entertained with all manner of diversions at the royal expense. On the other hand the obsequies of the average peasant are of a quite humble nature, the body, after the first or second ceremony, being removed to the village monastery to be out of the way, and there left until the family has time and money for the cremation. The Lao practise both burial and cremation, the latter being reserved for their rulers and monks. Chinese, Malays, and other races inhabiting Siam bury their dead.

Siamese Buddhism is of the southern variety and similar in its tenets to the religion of Burma and Ceylon. The king is in fact religious primate, and there is a complete hierarchy by law established, as well as an ecclesiastical department to control the secular affairs of the Church. There are over

ten thousand monasteries, and the monks, exclusive of temporary recluses, number nearly two hundred thousand. Though, with the growth of Western ideas, the intellectual classes have fallen away from the full observances of religion, in the rural districts the people still observe them fully.

The art and literature of Siam were, until recently, secondary religious exercises, that is, they were inspired by religion, devoted to religious ends, and pursued chiefly by monks. Modern requirements have changed this somewhat, but even now the greater part of the artistic and literary productions of the country has to some degree a religious significance.

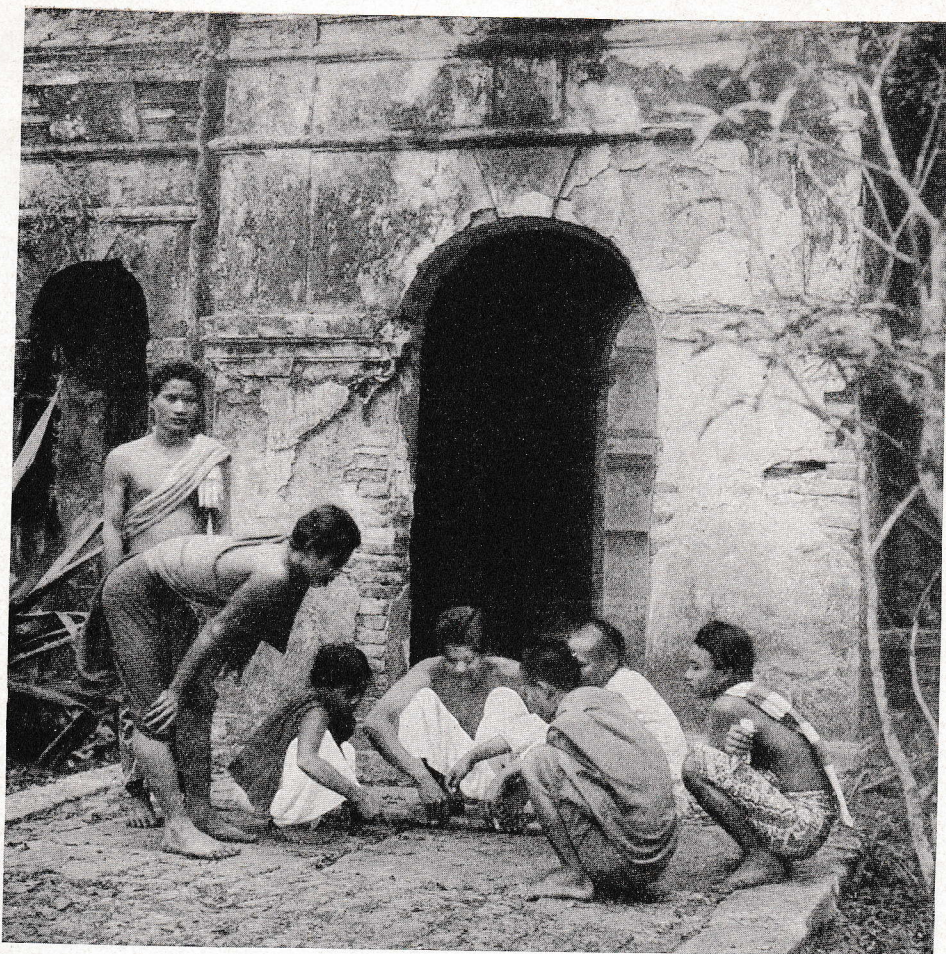
Of the arts, the principal are silver-working, wood-carving, bronze-casting, lacquer-working, embroidery, drawing and painting. Betel-boxes, tobacco-boxes, drinking-cups, cuspidors, and



### ANOINTED FOR THE SACRIFICE TO ADOLESCENCE

Her topknot carefully arranged and garlanded, this young lady smilingly awaits its removal at the tonsure ceremony undergone by all Siamese children as formal proclamation of their adolescence. On his accession, in 1910, King Rama VI. sanctioned European fashions of hairdressing, and many young women now grow their hair long and arrange it in various attractive ways





#### PLAYING PITCH AND TOSS BY THE DOOR OF A CRUMBLING TEMPLE

Siamese are confirmed gamblers, and before the authorities closed the public gaming-houses a considerable revenue was derived from the sale of gambling monopolies. The game is here being played outside a ruined temple. There are many such, for the Siamese hold that, in the eyes of heaven, he who repairs a temple acquires no merit himself, but merely adds to that of the original builder

*Photo, O. A. Fry*

other utensils are made in silver with designs, of religious or mythical origin, in repoussé work, unadorned or inlaid with a black metallic flux (niello). The designs used for carving, lacquer-work, and embroidery are all similar to those found in silverware.

Lacquer-work is of several kinds: the design imposed in gilt on a black lacquer ground, or inlaid in mother-of-pearl in soft lacquer, or etched on hard lacquer with lines filled in with various colours. Images of the Buddha in thousands, censers, dishes, and trays are cast in bronze. Figure and freehand drawing have attained a

considerable degree of excellence, but notions of landscape, perspective, and colour are very primitive.

Music is much cultivated; instruments are numerous and are used in concert or alone. Singing is a common accomplishment, but the singing voice has peculiarities which make it difficult of appreciation by foreigners. Harmony has no place in the national conception of music, but young Siamese take readily to the European system. Military marches and soldiers' marching songs, all in Siamese rhythm and cadence, are a recent development of the indigenous art.





COATS CUT ACCORDING TO CLOTH

Clothing with the Kamoos is no question of propriety, but of means. He whose portion of the world's goods is sufficient for his needs dons trousers or at least a skirt. Otherwise a loin cloth must suffice, save for gala days

*Photo, W. A. Elder*

The drama is highly developed. Until recently a rigid adherence to classic stage convention was carefully observed, but since about 1910 a new form of the art has grown up, based upon a union of Oriental and European methods. This new art, encouraged by the king, a devotee of both schools, seems likely to have far-reaching results. All classical plays are operatic, and, the facial expression of the actors being concealed by cosmetics, and natural voice-modulation forbidden, the emotions are expressed by conventional gestures.

The Siamese language is closely allied to Shan and distantly to Cambodian. Both Bali and Sanscrit enter

largely into its composition. The alphabet belongs to the Further Indian group, and has forty-four consonants with thirty-two vowel signs. Writing is from left to right without space between words, and with almost no punctuation.

The literature consists of sacred scriptures; of romantic stories taken from Brahman mythology; of local histories; of laws made by wise kings; of medical treatises inextricably confounding pharmaceuticals with witchcraft; of epics, ballads, and love songs innumerable; and of guides to wisdom and deportment for every walk in life.

Before the introduction of printing, books were few, and each consisted of a single sheet of coarse cardboard-like paper many yards long and folded in accordion pleats. The script was always clearly and carefully executed, and elaborate illustrations were frequent.

Most of these were the work of monks, and the library was a feature in many monasteries of note. Such literature was practically beyond the reach of the common people, but it provided the repertoires of minstrels, raconteurs, soothsayers, and others who lived by retailing it viva voce to the populace.

Printing, of course, revolutionised the system. All the old literature is now available in cheap books, while of modern works on history, art, law, and other subjects, and translations or adaptations from novels and plays of Europe, there is a continuous production. A peculiar form of book consisting of sacred verses and formulae





#### KAMOO TRIBESMAN FROM THE HILLS OF NORTHERN SIAM

Believed to be descendants of some of the original inhabitants of this part of South Asia who were driven to the refuge of the high hills by subsequent invaders, the Kamoos are related to the Môn-Annam race. They are grouped by the Siamese with other northern tribes, and called collectively Kaché or Ka. Many find employment in the teak forests

*Photo, W. A. Elder*





# SIAMESE ACTORS IN CONVENTIONAL POSES OF THEIR CLASSIC DRAMA

Among the most ancient and precious institutions in the country, the drama is highly developed and well patronised. The players themselves are either peripatetic or maintained privately by the nobles. Here is a scene from the "Yi Kay" form of play, in which female parts are taken by men.

These actors are in the conventional characters of princess, prince, and demon

*Photo, Charles J. Charbot*





#### ELABORATELY GARBED ACTRESSES IN A TRIUMPH OF POSTURE

Incidental dancing is often interpolated with the action of a Siamese play. When actresses take part, the type of performance is called "Lakhon" as opposed to the other form of legitimate drama "Yi Kay." The stage is usually a space on three sides of which sit the audience, and the only "property" is a raised platform that serves for anything from a cottage to a throne

*Photo, Charles J. Charbot*

etched on slips of palm leaf is stored in most monasteries, and is used for administering oaths and other matters of grave importance.

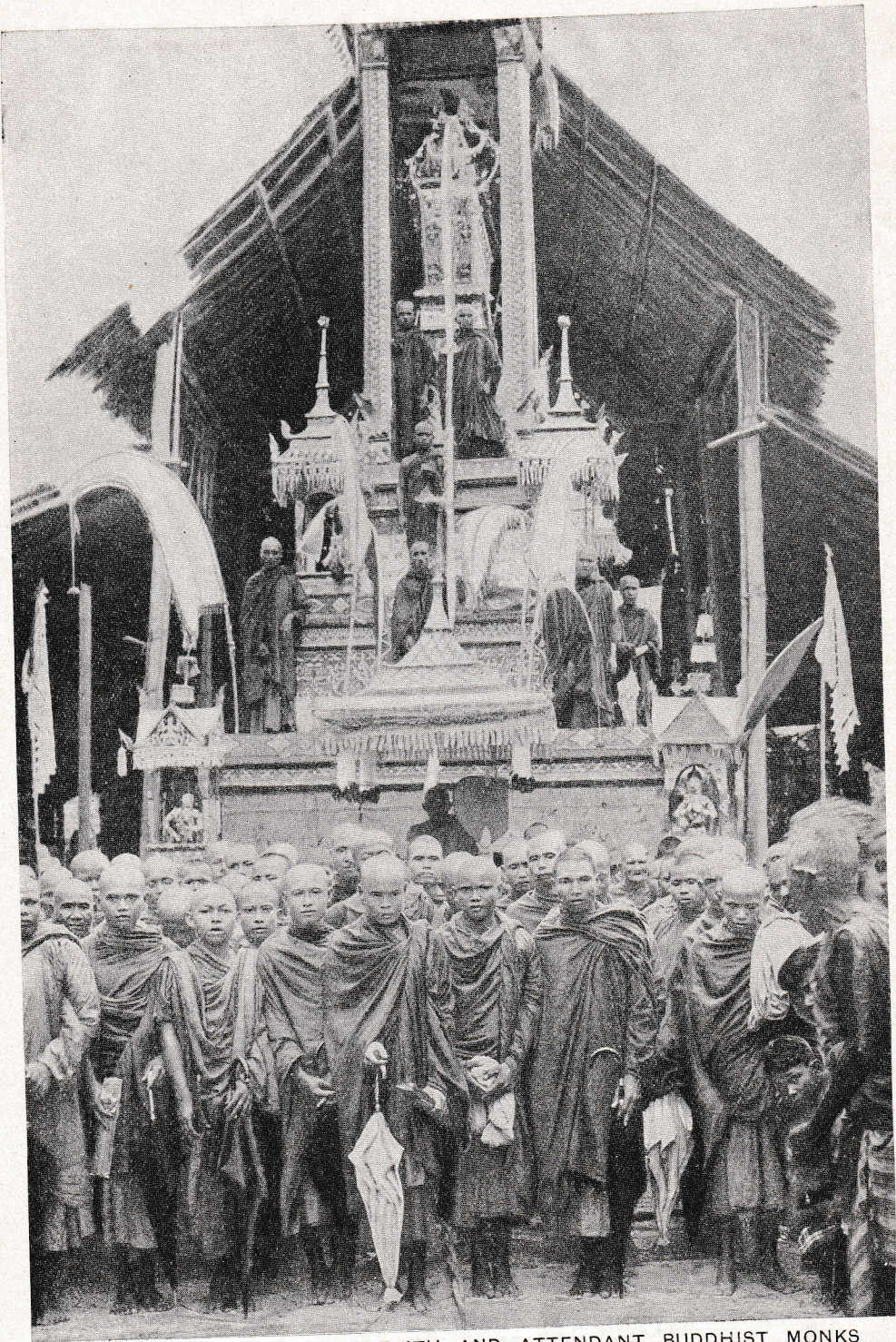
With the exception of rice-milling the only considerable industries in Siam are connected with the production of raw material, all manufactured articles being imported. Rice-growing is the first of these, providing food for the population and a surplus for export that is the chief source of the national income. The industry, up to the point of reaping, is entirely in Siamese hands, but from then on it is Chinese. The rice is brought to the winnowing ground by Chinese middlemen; it is carried to Bangkok in boats rowed by Chinese coolies; it is sold in Bangkok to the Chinese owners of Chinese-manned mills, and there finally prepared

for export or for consumption in the local market.

Other agricultural products include coconuts, exported in the form of copra, pepper, rubber, cattle, pigs, pulse, and various fruits. Of non-agricultural products, teak and other forest timbers are extracted, and tin is mined. The control of these is mostly in the hands of Europeans, and the labour employed is Lao for the former and Chinese for the latter. Boat-building, brick-making, pottery, weaving, sericulture, are other minor industries.

Sea and freshwater fishing occupies everybody more or less, and provides permanent employment for a considerable number of people; rice with fish, cured or fresh, forming the staple food of the population.





**TEMPLE OF THE SIAMESE FAITH AND ATTENDANT BUDDHIST MONKS**  
In Siam a temple is called a "Bot." There is usually a monastery attached known as a "Wat," whose inmates spend much of their time wandering about the country from shrine to shrine in parties. They are entirely supported by voluntary contributions in kind, and though forbidden to beg, they will stand outside a house, meditating, till someone comes and fills their alms bowls with food

*Photo, Hyllon R. Philipson*



# Siam

## II. The Story of "the Land of the Free"

By W. A. Graham

Author of "Siam: A Handbook"

THE country now called Siam, the native name of which, Muang Thai, means the Land of the Free, appears to have been inhabited at first by Negritos, a primitive race whose wild descendants still persist in the mountains of southern Siam. These were supplanted by tribes of the Mongoloid family, Mon-Annam, which, some two thousand years ago, overran the Further Indian Peninsula to its southernmost point.

Influenced by colonists from India, these tribes developed on the one hand into the Peguan or Mon race, and on the other into the Cambodian or Khmer, those inhabiting the territories between (now constituting Siam) remaining in the original benighted state. Gradually the civilizing influences of the Mon and Khmer spread to these backward tribes until the whole sub-continent was more or less on a level of advancement, and groups of small states had been everywhere set up, their rulers adopting the customs and beliefs imported from India.

Some centuries later these states had resolved themselves into three main groups, admitting the suzerainty of the kings of Pegu and Cambodia to the west and east, and of a state then named Sajanalaya in the middle. Into this last there penetrated from the north hordes of another Mongoloid family, the Lao-Tai, who struggled with Sajanalaya for several centuries, and finally fused themselves completely with the people, and so gave rise to a new race, the Thai or Siamese.

The centre of power of the Sajanalaya states moved to and fro about the country, as its

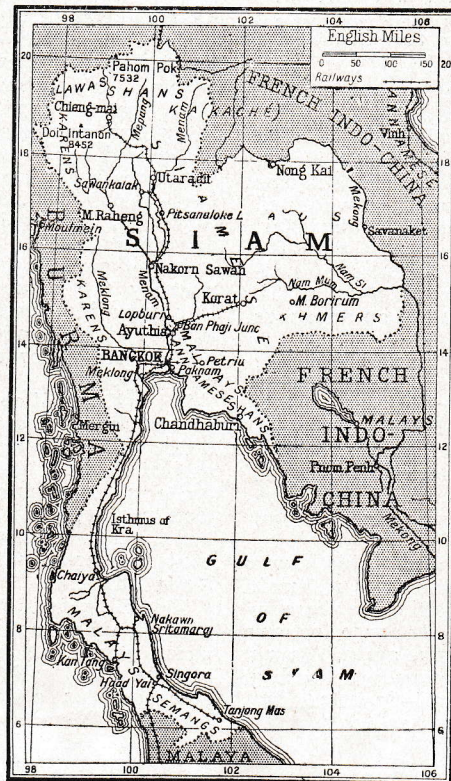
component parts waxed and waned in strength, until at last it was fixed at the capital of Maha Nakon Sri Ayudhya (Ayuthia) in A.D. 1350.

The period 1350 to 1765 constitutes the Ayuthia era. What with internal upheavals, and struggles with Burma and Cambodia, this period seems to have been one of almost continual war. Many of the kings preferred the arts of peace to those of war and found time for law-making, administration, and religious exercises, but fighting continued all the time and the state passed through extreme vicissitudes, being sometimes almost extinguished and at others rising to pinnacles of power and glory. Thus, about 1550 Ayuthia was taken by the Peguans and Burmese, and the Siamese king was carried into captivity. Thirty years later a complete recovery had been made, Burmese

armies had been defeated and Pegu pillaged, and a successful war had been prosecuted against Cambodia.

Portuguese merchant adventurers and missionaries found their way to Siam in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and early in the seventeenth century English and Dutch ships appeared in Siamese waters.

In 1641 the defeat of the Portuguese by the Dutch at Malacca ruined the prestige of the former and caused their downfall in Siam. The Dutch prospered for some time, and the first formal treaty contracted by Siam with Europeans was that made with the Dutch East India Company in 1664. The Dutch, however, finally lost the royal favour and left the country. The British East India Company



SIAM AND ITS PEOPLES





#### MEOS DAMSEL OF THE NORTH

Near the borders of French Indo-China live the sturdy Meos tribe. They are remarkable among their neighbours for their cleanliness, intelligence, and industry

established stations at Pattani and Ayuthia, but did not obtain much trade.

A French Roman Catholic mission was opened at Ayuthia in 1662, and, under the protection of Constantine Faulkon, a Greek adventurer who had risen to power as the king's chief minister, prospered to such an extent that the missionaries conceived the idea of converting the whole population to Christianity and the country into an appanage of France.

The interest of Louis XIV. was aroused. He sent envoys to Siam and received the first Siamese diplomatic mission ever sent to Europe. He also sent ships, a general, and 1400 soldiers to Ayuthia. The Siamese nobility, becoming alarmed, rebelled, killed the king and his Greek minister, and turned every European out of the country.

A successful soldier of low birth was then made king and quiet was restored. On his death the legitimate dynasty recovered the throne. In 1759 serious war with Burma broke out again, Alaung Phra, king of Ava, invading Siam with a large army. Ayuthia was invested, but the Burmese king died and his army thereupon retired.

The successor of Alaung Phra renewed the conflict and again drove the Siamese

behind the walls of Ayuthia. A long siege followed, ending in 1765 with the destruction of the city, the death of the Siamese king, and the general break up of the kingdom.

Resuscitation began with the exploits of Phaya Tak, a half-Chinese ex-official who, having taken to the jungle on the fall of Ayuthia, assumed the rôle of Liberator. He raised a following and defeated the Burmese army of occupation, made himself king (1772), founded the capital of Bangkok, recovered the allegiance of the outlying provinces and, in 1781, went mad and was removed.

The people, expecting a Burmese attack, now chose as king Phaya Chakkri, a prominent war leader, and this was as well, for a Burmese offensive soon materialised. Chakkri rose to the occasion. He enticed the enemy far into the country, then cut off their supplies by removing the entire population, and, having starved the invaders into demoralisation, attacked them with vigour and signally defeated them.

The remainder of Phaya Chakkri's reign was passed in consolidating his hold over the country, which he did in such a manner that when he died, in 1809, his son succeeded without opposition and passed his rather short reign in almost unbroken tranquillity. On the demise of the Crown in A.D. 1825 a lesser prince forestalled his brother, the rightful heir, by a coup d'état, and, under the title of Phra Chao Prasat Tong (also known as Phra Nang Klao), reigned forty-two years. He entered into treaties of friendship and commerce with Great Britain (1826) and the U.S.A. (1833), thus opening the door to European trade, practically non-existent since 1688. He, however, declined to admit consuls or consular jurisdiction, whereby the value of his treaties was largely nullified, as foreign commerce was entirely in the hands of Chinese monopoly holders, altogether inimical to the advent of Europeans.

Phra Nang Klao fought a campaign against Wieng Chan, a rebellious dependency on the Mekong, and sent an army against Annam, thereby obtaining Cambodia as a Siamese protectorate. He died in 1851, when the rightful heir, who had lived in retirement as a monk, succeeded under the title of Phra Paramindr Maha Mongkut.

This king brought to affairs of state education and enlightenment in an unusual degree. A student of European customs, and efficient in the English language, his attitude towards foreign relations differed from that of his forebears. His reception of Sir John Bowring, the envoy sent by Great Britain to Siam in 1855, was highly favourable, and the



## SIAM & ITS STORY

outcome of the mission was a treaty whereby Siam admitted British consular jurisdiction, abandoned trade monopolies, fixed tariffs, and placed the British trader in Siam on a sure footing. Similar treaties followed with other countries, and soon Siam was in sound commercial relations with the U.S.A. and nearly the whole of Europe.

Maha Mongkut strongly encouraged education and gave special care to that of his own children. He also did much to purify the national religion. Though strictly celibate up to the age of forty-seven years, he married a number of wives on becoming king, and when he died left about a hundred children.

In this reign France laid claim, as conqueror of Annam, to Cambodia. The king saw fit to surrender his rights and admit the French contention.

Mongkut died in 1868, and his son Chulalongkorn succeeded as a minor. The state was under a regency, but the king soon assumed full power. He reigned forty-two years and devoted himself solely to the interests of his country. His internal reforms were constantly hampered

by trouble with the French that almost culminated in war in 1893. An agreement between Britain and France to respect Siamese autonomy removed the trouble; relations improved, and treaties in 1904 and 1907 closed the breach, not, however, without material loss of territory to Siam.

The king's ambition was to disestablish consular jurisdiction in Siam. In this he was partially successful, bartering his Malay provinces and the district of Battambang to Great Britain and France respectively in return for partial surrender of extra territorial rights.

Chulalongkorn visited Europe twice. He inaugurated military conscription, ports and telegraphs and railways, fostered education, and reformed the revenue, justice, police, and social systems. He died in 1910 deeply mourned, and was succeeded by his son Rama VI., who continued his father's reforms, adding Denmark and the U.S.A. to those Powers who had surrendered extra territoriality. In 1917 he joined the Allies, declared war on Germany, and sent a Siamese contingent to France.

## SIAM : FACTS AND FIGURES

### The Country

Forms part of the extreme south-easterly projection of Asia which also includes Burma, French Indo-China, and the Malay Peninsula. Bordered on north-west and west by Burma, south by Malay States, east and north-east by French Indo-China. South portion of country is a peninsula between Indian Ocean and south China Sea; chain of mountains passes down the centre, and there is good pasturage. In the north are many parallel ranges covered with forests and well watered. Eastern part is mainly a plain surrounded by hills and is covered by jungle and swamps. In the centre of country is a large fertile tract of level country through which flow principal rivers. Total area about 195,000 square miles, with an estimated population of some 8,800,000.

### Government and Constitution

King wields executive power with the advice of a Cabinet composed of the heads of Governmental Departments. Legislative council convened by royal decree consisting of Ministers of State meets not less than once a week. Royal signature necessary to all legislation except in time of temporary disability of sovereign. Kingdom is divided for administrative purposes into eighteen "circles" under Lords Lieutenants with the exception of Bangkok, which is controlled by the Minister of Local Government.

### Defence

Compulsory military service is in force for every able-bodied citizen for two years in the line and twenty-two in the three reserves. Army consists of ten divisions, and there is a flying corps. Navy comprises gunboats and destroyers with a total personnel of about 5,000, including marines, and a reserve of 20,000.

### Commerce and Industries

Principal product of Siam is rice, to which over 6,300,000 acres were devoted during 1921-22. There are large numbers of live-stock, including more than 6,000 elephants. Teak cutting in the north and rubber planting in the south are pursued. Mineral deposits include coal, iron, tin, tungsten, zinc, and antimony. Cost of labour high in comparison with other Oriental countries. Imports for year 1921-22 were valued at £13,958,512, and included cottons, food-stuffs, and metal manufactures. Exports for same year, mainly rice and teak, amounted to £17,170,777. Standard coin, the silver tical. Nominal value, 1s. 6½d.

### Communications

There are over 1,300 miles of state railway. Post offices and agencies number about 380, with some 90 telegraph offices working over 6,500 miles of wire. Two telephone exchanges and wireless stations are in operation.

### Religion and Education

Bulk of population are Buddhists, and there are more than 13,000 temples and over 87,000 priests. There are besides a large number of Malays who are Mahomedan. There are over 400 elementary schools, with some 41,000 pupils. All education save in departmental schools for military, naval, and legal purposes is in the hands of the Minister of Education. There is a university at Bangkok.

### Chief Towns

Bangkok, capital (estimated population 541,000), Ayuthia (50,000), Chiang-mai (30,000), Petrii (10,000), Korat (7,000), Chantabun (5,000).





**SUNDAY IN SIBERIA : VILLAGERS ASSEMBLED AT A TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY STATION TO VIEW A PASSING TRAIN**  
 Siberian life is by no means uncongenial to its natives, who are well able to resist the extremes of temperature. Usually regarded as a country of intense cold and eternal snow, Siberia is seldom pictured in its summer garb, when the woods and wide stretches of plain are resplendent with a rich, ripe vegetation, and numerous flowers and berries may be had for the gathering. And there are vast regions, chiefly in the steppe zone, where the earth is of such unfailing fertility that the Siberians say of it : "When tickled with the hoe it laughs with a harvest."